

February 2nd, 2004

Dear Dr. Gerberding,

We've not met yet to discuss these matters, but I'm sure you're aware of the Institute of Medicine Meeting regarding vaccines and autism that will take place on February 9th. I will be presenting the summary of our results from the Metropolitan Atlanta Autism Case-Control Study and I will have to present several problematic results relating to statistical associations between the receipt of MMR vaccine and autism.

It's my understanding that you are aware of several news articles published over the past two weeks suggesting that Representative David Weldon is still waiting for a response from you regarding two letters he sent you regarding issues surrounding the integrity of your scientists in the National Immunization Program. I've repeatedly asked individuals in the NIP Office of the Directors Office why you haven't responded directly to the issues raised in those letters and I'm very disappointed with the answers I've received to date. In addition, I've repeatedly told individuals in the NIP OD over the last several years that they're doing a very poor job representing immunization safety issues and that we're losing the public relations war.

On Friday afternoon, January 30th, I presented the draft slides for IOM presentation to Dr. Steve Cochi and Dr. Melinda Wharton. The first thing I stated to both of them was my sincere concern regarding presenting this work to the Institute of Medicine if you had not replied to Representative Weldon's letters. I have attached the draft slides for your review. I have been told that you have suggested that the science speak for itself. In general I agree with that statement, but as you know, the science also needs advocates who can get the real scientific message out to the public.

In contrast to NIP's failure to be proactive in addressing immunization safety issues, you have done an amazingly effective job addressing the press on a wide range of controversial public health issues including SARS, Monkey Pox and Influenza. The CDC needs your leadership here because I may very well be presenting data before a hostile crowd of parents with autistic children who have been told not to trust the CDC. I believe it is your responsibility and duty to respond in writing to Representative Weldon's letters before the Institute of Medicine meeting and make those letters public. Otherwise, you give the appearance of agreeing with what he has been suggested in those correspondences and you're putting one of your own scientists in harms way. This is not the time for our leadership to act politically. It is a time for our leadership to stand by their scientists and do the right thing. Please assist me in this matter and respond to Representative Weldon's concerns in writing prior to my presentation on February 9th.

Sincerely,

William. W. Thompson, PhD
Epidemiologist
Immunization Safety Branch